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TAGS: PREL PTER PGOV IS JO KPAL  
SUBJECT: ISRAELI VIEWS ON JORDANIAN DEVELOPMENTS

REF: A. AMMAN 2424  
    1B. AMMAN 2414

Classified By: DCM Luis G. Moreno, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Israel has not reacted publicly to Jordan's decision to resume its official dialogue with Hamas. MFA DDG for the Middle East Hadas played down the significance of the Jordanian move in an August 20 conversation with Pol Couns. Hadas said the GOI was much more upset by Jordan's decision to release four prisoners convicted by Israel of killing two IDF personnel in 1990. Israel returned them to Jordan in July 2007 with the understanding that they would serve at least 18 months in jail. Hadas said Jordan's move may have been legal but it was damaging to Jordan's credibility. Another Israeli contact with good connections to Jordan told us recently that lack of progress on the ground in the West Bank was feeding Jordanian fears about the future. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Pol Couns discussed recent developments in Jordan August 20 with MFA Deputy Director General (A/S equivalent) for the Middle East Yacov Hadas. Hadas, a recent former ambassador to Jordan, said the GOI had decided not to comment publicly on Jordan's decision to resume its official dialogue with Hamas. Hadas noted that Jordanian intelligence chief Dahabi, who has been charged with conducting the dialogue, is known for his hostility to Hamas. Hadas thought the dialogue did not reflect any change in official Jordanian attitudes and would likely be short-lived.

¶3. (C) Hadas saw two reasons behind the Jordanian decision. First, the Palace wanted to placate pro-Hamas public opinion and hoped to distract the Jordanian "street" from economic difficulties, including a severe drought and wheat shortage. Secondly, Hadas thought Jordan was sending a message to the U.S. and Israel that Jordan feels isolated and ignored. The Jordanians, in his view, see the Iranian-led radical bloc as the ascendent force in the region and are alarmed. Hadas summed up the Jordanian outlook by quoting one of the Hebrew prophets: "The wicked prosper while the righteous suffer."

¶4. (C) Regarding the Jordanian decision to release four prisoners who had been convicted in Israel of the 1990 killing of an IDF officer and a soldier and who were repatriated to Jordan in July 2007, however, Hadas said the Israelis were outraged. Hadas, who was personally involved in the repatriation negotiations, said that while the Jordanian decision may have been legal, Jordan had reneged on its commitment during the negotiations that the prisoners would serve at least 18 months in prison after their return to Jordan. The prisoners' release was not critical in itself, Hadas stressed, but it was damaging to Israel's image of Jordan as a country that honors its commitments. Hadas also complained that the Jordanians were again criticizing Israel's plans to construct a new ramp to the Mughrabi Gate on the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif in Jerusalem's Old City. Hadas said the construction plan had been vetted with the Jordanians and a revised plan was developed that incorporated a number of Jordanian requests.

15. (C) Separately, BG (reserve) Baruch Spiegel, an adviser to President Peres, told Pol Couns that he was concerned about the state of Israeli relations with Jordan. Spiegel said that during a recent visit to Amman, he found the Jordanians deeply alarmed by the lack of progress on the ground in the West Bank, as well as by continued Israeli announcements of plans to expand settlements. Spiegel stated that the settlement activity in particular was reviving Jordanian suspicions that Israel's real agenda is to solve the Palestinian issue by turning Jordan into the Palestinian state.

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